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FIRST IN THE WORLD-HERALD

FUTURE OF OMAHA TRANSPORTATION

Planners envision widened Interstates and expanded public transit

By JEFFREY ROBB
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The road ahead of metro Omaha's transportation system is an expensive one: \$7.4 billion.

But the new road map is meant to chart the course for the Omaha of the future — one with 1.3 million people who are expected to increasingly use driverless cars, share the road with autonomous semis, hop Omaha's growing bus rapid transit system or even take a streetcar.

Omaha is not going the way of the Jetsons, with automated aerial

A proposal looking out to 2040 calls for rebuilding the Interstate through the metro area, including I-80, above, I-480 and I-680.

vehicles.

No, Omaha still loves its automobiles. And the new long-term travel improvement proposal would put significant attention — and funding — into streets and freeways.

But this is still the conceptual portion of the study, with no details decided yet on specific projects, costs, priorities or funding.

Notably, the study looking out to 2040 would rebuild the Interstate through the metro area. It would widen Interstates 80, 480 and 680 — a difficult prospect for a highway that's all but maxed out.

But alongside that, transportation planners say Omaha needs a significant expansion of its public transit system. The report, an effort by the Nebraska Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency, proposes to focus 40 percent of the costs on transit.

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NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

This session's priorities: budget gap and tax cuts

Will experience give rise to harmony? Or will bitter partisan fights return?

By MARTHA STODDARD
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN — One state senator predicts that this year's legislative session will be a “knock-down, drag-out” fight like last year's.

Another hopes that lawmakers have gotten to know each other well enough to reach common ground on major issues confronting Nebraska.

Yet a third calls it “anyone's guess” how the session may go after it kicks off today.

“When you have 49 independent contractors, I don't think there's any certainty,” said State Sen. Jim Smith of Papillion, who is serving his last year in the Nebraska Legislature.

Nebraska lawmakers will gather at the State Capitol today to start their 60-day legislative session. The session is slated to wrap up in mid-April.

Speaker of the Legislature Jim Scheer of Norfolk said he expects the state's budget shortfall and demands for tax cuts to dominate the session.

Gov. Pete Ricketts agreed, calling the budget and taxes the top issues facing the state.

He said he wants to work with lawmakers on balancing the budget without raising taxes and finding a combination of income and property tax cuts that can win enough votes to pass the Legislature.

The state faces a \$200 million gap between projected revenues and estimated state spending needs for the two-year budget period that ends June 30, 2019.

Ricketts will unveil his budget proposals and other legislative initiatives during the State of the State speech on Jan. 10.

The bulk of the Legislature's

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Man ‘entered shooting,’ killing three, prosecutor says

By ALIA CONLEY
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The man accused of fatally shooting his parents and a niece “entered shooting through the front door,” a prosecutor said in court Tuesday. All three victims, the prosecutor said, suffered multiple gunshot wounds.

John W. Dalton Jr. will be held without bail, Judge Marcena Hendrix decided Tuesday. He faces three counts of first-degree murder and four felony weapons charges.

Dalton Jr.'s parents, John W. Dalton Sr., 70, and Jean Dalton, 65, and an 18-year-old niece, Leonna Dalton-Phillip, were killed Dec. 26 in John and Jean Dalton's home near 37th and Spaulding Streets.

Dalton Jr., 46, was arrested the next day near Jackson, Tennessee, and was returned to Omaha.

Prosecutors said Tuesday that Dalton Jr.'s father was shot five times, his mother was shot four times and his niece was shot twice.

Douglas County Attorney Don

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U.S. OPERATIONS

After visit, Bacon optimistic about Iraq and Afghanistan

‘It's going to be a while,’ he says, before Americans are out of the troubled nations

By JOSEPH MORTON
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Rep. Don Bacon is upbeat about progress in both Iraq and Afghanistan after a recent trip to the region.

Bacon characterized the scene in Afghanistan as improving since President Donald Trump outlined an approach in August that includes additional troops and no calendar deadline for withdrawal.

Morale has improved among Afghan forces, and Taliban fighters have been losing ground even though they still control large swaths of territory, Bacon said.

American commander wants more aggressive Afghan military. **Page 2A**

“Can we sustain it? That remains to be seen,” Bacon told The World-Herald. But there have been gains since August, he said.

The war in Afghanistan is in the latter half of its second decade. Over the years, policymakers have talked often about increasing the independence of Afghan forces, Taliban losses and shifts in momentum.

But there's little reason to think U.S. military operations there will be ending anytime soon.

Michael O'Hanlon, a foreign policy expert at the Brookings Institution, said by email that he remains hopeful about Afghanistan and that the situation there is at least somewhat better than convention-

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Saving black-footed cats

A Henry Doorly Zoo scientist is helping fend off extinction of the 4-pound African felines. **Living**

School staffer will be tried

Matthew Fedde, a Millard South assistant principal, will fight sex assault charges. **Midlands**

Omaha forecast

High: 14 Low: -6
Breezy, partly sunny
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